

**ROLE PLAYING- A LIVING EXPERIENCE TO ENRICH LEARNING****Prof. Rajshree Rathod****& Bhakti Joshi** (Page 241-247)

Tilak College of Education, Pune

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ABSTRACT

Every teaching and learning experience is about trying to define a context. This is what makes educational drama such an effective tool for the teaching. Drama can provide the teacher with situations that help to promote discussion and to clarify ideas and points of view. It also enables teachers to lead children towards a position where they can take on different roles. Drama offers a rich range of activities which can be applied in the service of developing spontaneity and a broader role repertoire. Drama in education reflects a shift from an overemphasis on informational content to a more balanced inclusion of attention to the processing of ideas. As Postman noted in a keynote speech to drama educators, cultural literacy won't suffice without a framework of meaning, "a life enhancing story," in which facts may be rationally coordinated. Role-playing, a derivative of a sociodrama is a method for exploring the issues involved in complex social situations. It may be used for the training of professionals or in a classroom for the understanding of literature, history, and even science. The present paper examines role playing as a method to facilitate learning and overall psychosocial development.

Keywords: Drama, Role play, Education



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INTRODUCTION

The great developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget, described two modes of learning: "assimilation" and "accommodation." In assimilation, people figuratively "fill in" their mental map of their world, while in accommodation, they figuratively change that mental map, expand or alter it to fit their new perceptions. Both processes are complementary and concurrent, but different types of learning tend to emphasize one or the other mode. Rote memorization tends to emphasize assimilation. In contrast, learning to climb a tree, swim, or ride a bicycle emphasizes accommodation. Accommodation involves a gaining of a "knack," and tends to be the kind of learning that is almost impossible to fully forget. Assimilative learning, as we all know, is remarkably easy to forget. It is a commonly accepted cliché that we want to teach our young people to think, but thinking at any level of complexity requires an exercise of three interdependent component categories of skills: problem-solving; communications; Self-awareness. And the best way to learn all three categories of skills (each category containing over a score of component skills) is through role playing. Role-play is a

pedagogy that been used in a wide variety of contexts and content areas. Essentially, it is the practice of having students take on specific roles - usually ones in which they are not familiar - and act them out in a case-based scenario for the purpose of learning course content or understanding “complex or ambiguous concepts”. The guidelines for the role-play are usually modeled on realistic criteria so the students can get as close to “the real thing” as possible. Research on role-play’s effectiveness and best practices exists as far back as the 1970s; recently however, role-play has been touted as a tool better suited for the needs of today’s college student than more traditional teaching methods. Role-play pedagogy has been shown to be effective in reaching learning outcomes in three major learning domains: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. By making students take on the role of another person, they practice empathy and perspective taking. This can lead to more self-reflection and awareness on the part of the student. When students take the skills they have learned in theory and put them in practice, this creates a deeper cognitive link to the material, making it easier for students to learn. Finally, using role-play as a training tool helps students change behaviors and use best practices in real-world settings. Role playing can be incorporated in any number of learning situations. For example, it can be used to deepen the analysis of a work of fiction, to illustrate case studies and scenarios, and to learn more intimately about different historical time periods. By directly immersing themselves in a situation, the performers come to appreciate the complex experiences of the characters they are portraying. This is a very hands-on form of pedagogy; it is quite unlike listening to teacher give information or watching a documentary, both of which situate learners at more of a remove from the material.

ROLE PLAY EXPLAINED

When pupils assume a role they play a part in a specific situation. Play means that the role is taken on in a safe environment in which pupils are as inventive and playful as possible. Students unselfconsciously create their own reality, and by doing so, they are experimenting with their knowledge of the real world and developing their ability to interact with other people. According to Richard Courtney, “play, acting and thought are interrelated. They are mechanisms by which individual tests reality, get rid of anxieties and master the environment.”

Situations in a role- play may be simple or elaborate, familiar or strange. They may be described in detail or left to the imagination of the role- player. The learning that takes place may be first- hand or second- hand, it may be acquired by participation or observation. And

the learning outcome may be skill or technique or it may come in the nature of sensitization and change in attitude.

Rao & Stupans have created a useful typology for organizing the various role-play activities that are used in higher education: 'Role-Switch,' 'Acting,' and 'Almost Real Life.' 'Role-Switch' requires the student to take on the role of another agent to understand the actions and motivations of someone else. 'Acting' role-plays allow students to practice newly-developed skills by simulating a scenario where that skill may be required. 'Almost Real Live' is a role-play "as close to the real experience as is possible". This type of role-play lets students apply all their skills in a realistic, yet safe setting. Each of these categories focuses on a different learning domain, though all overlap to some degree. The authors also surveyed the literature to collect best practices across all types of role-plays. Best practices include the instructor thinking deeply about the learning goals of the role-play and choosing a case that best reaches those goals; ensuring both the instructor and students are adequately prepared with case materials and familiar with the pedagogy; and allowing for sufficient and appropriate feedback and debriefing of the entire exercise.

WHY USE ROLE-PLAYING?

The problem with teaching pure, undiluted information is that afterwards, the students, if they paid attention, will be left asking "What is it for? What does it mean?" Role-playing enables them to start answering these questions and to start expanding them. Information, alone, rarely makes people change their minds, but personal experience often does. Role-playing, like any good inquiry approach, transforms the content of education from information into experience.

Motivating Students

The creative aspect of the exercise will make it seem more like play than like work. The pressure to solve a problem or to resolve a conflict for their character can motivate a student far more than the sort of pressure that they usually face preparing for an exam, and it is far more typical of the pressure that will be on them in real life.

Augmenting Traditional Curricula

The primary purpose of role-playing exercises is to get students to look at the material they are learning in a new light. Role-playing exercises show the world as a complex place with complicated problems that can only rarely be solved by a simple answer that the student has previously memorized.

Real-World Skills

Students need to understand the needs and perspectives of the people around them to get through life, and to understand themselves. Role-playing exercises can be used to develop skills important inside and outside of science: the kind of skills needed to make learned information useful in the real world. Many of these are very difficult to teach using more traditional methods of instruction: self-awareness, problem solving, communication, initiative, teamwork.

STEPS OF THE ROLE- PLAYING PROCESS

1. Defining the problem
2. Establishing a situation
3. Casting the characters
4. Briefing and warming up the actors
5. Acting
6. Cutting
7. Discussion and analysis of the situation and behaviour
8. Pinning down what is learnt

ROLE PLAYING AS SIMULATION

Role playing isn't to be viewed as a particularly psychological procedure. Certainly, it has been widely used as a part of many different types of therapy, but this is because it's a natural vehicle for learning. Role playing is simply a less technologically elaborate form of simulations. This is because complex operations cannot include all variables in a single lecture or even a thick book. Issues of adapting general principles to one's own set of abilities, temperament, and background; working out the inevitable "bugs" any complex system generates; and preparing for unforeseen eventualities all are frequent goals of this kind of role playing.

ROLE PLAYING IN EDUCATION

Role playing uses dramatic devices such as having the players make "a sides," comments to the audience that the other characters have to pretend they haven't heard; this allows us to reveal what we think but are not able to say.

Another dramatic device, role reversal, involves the players changing parts so they can begin to empathize with the other's point of view, even if they don't agree. Speaking from different parts of each role helps people become more conscious of their ambivalence. These sociodramatic techniques facilitate the degrees of self expression and, with reflection, thereby

deepen the insight obtained for both players and audience. And thus, this procedure can be used in conjunction with another approach which has different roots: drama in education.

Arising from a number of innovators in the fields of education and the theatre, the idea was to foster spontaneous exploration of various situations. This approach has also been called "creative drama," "developmental drama," and similar terms.

Drama in education can be used to teach about various topics in literature, social studies, history, and the like, and role playing can be used to enhance these experiences and motivate further study; or role playing can be used in a more constrained, focused way to help students understand some of the complexities of these subjects. Such experiences may then become a stimulus for more traditional teaching methods, writing and discussion.

THE VALUE OF ROLE PLAYING AS MEASURED BY BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Bloom contends that there are six developmental levels pertaining to the acquisition of knowledge and of intellectual analysis and skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

1. Role playing involves a collaborative application of what has been learned; it also requires students to synthesize aspects of the topic in the creative process of formulating the virtual play itself.
2. Furthermore, when analyzing the play after its presentation, students reach a better understanding of the topic. For example, they have the opportunity to identify any fallacies in the characters' assumptions, as well as distinguish between facts and inferences. This can all lead to a sound evaluation, by both the student performers and the audience, in which the value of the performance is assessed in terms of its organization as well as its relevance to the topic in question.
3. One of the most striking aspects of role playing is the way that students relate education with experience.
4. Another of the most noteworthy features of role playing is that it leads to sustained knowledge. This is vastly different from facts that are superficially memorized; in role playing, the topic is actively experienced, and the student-performer becomes deeply immersed in it.
5. Generally lively discussions ensue after the plays are completed, and many students have commented that role playing helped them to understand the topic at a higher level.

PROBLEMS WITH ROLE PLAYING

1. Role playing is a technology for intensifying and accelerating learning; so teachers have to be well trained and competent, or therapists well grounded in the various aspects of that role. They don't work well if used carelessly or as a substitute for actual planning and thinking.
2. The most common problem with role playing is that of the leader not appreciating its essential nature: It is an improvisational procedure, and improvisation requires a feeling of relative safety. This must be cultivated in a group, the teacher engaging the students in a "warming up" process in which they get to know each other in a more trusting fashion and become involved in the theme to be learned. The teacher as dramatic producer needs to talk to each of the players, interview them "in role," drawing them out regarding their thoughts about associated aspects of their role, gently involving them imaginatively in the situation.
3. Another problem with role playing arose when teachers gave into their own impulses to "play psychiatrist" and slip from dealing with the group problem to explore some issue to focusing on the real life personal problems of a given individual.
4. A third problem comes from the common tendency to assume that interpersonal skills are easier than technical skills though in fact they are even more difficult and so people tend to think they can engage in directing role playing before they've really achieved a level of bare competence (much less mastery).

CONCLUSION

Role playing is a methodology derived from sociodrama that may be used to help students understand the more subtle aspects of literature, social studies, and even some aspects of science or mathematics. Further, it can help them become more interested and involved, not only learning about the material, but learning also to integrate the knowledge in action, by addressing problems, exploring alternatives, and seeking novel and creative solutions. Role playing asks students to do something with the course material beyond simply memorizing it; it encourages them to identify with characters in specific situations and thus achieve a more meaningful understanding of the topic at hand. Moreover, the power of role playing often leads students to a sustained and passionate interest in the subject matter itself, which surely achieves one of our primary goals as educators.

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